ACTIVISM AND ECOFEMINIST LITERATURE

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Introduction

Ecofeminism, as a social, political and cultural movement, emerged in the 1970s out of a series of conferences and workshops held in the United States to deliberate on the intersection between feminism and environmentalism, and to raise awareness about the sacredness of the earth and all its life forms. Different scholars from diverse backgrounds and cultural contexts have tried to theorize and define the term ecofeminism, and practise it within their own ideological framework, so much so that it may qualify as an umbrella term as it draws confluence and parallels between the exploitation of earth and oppression of its varied life forms. Many grassroots movements such as “community groups, NGOs, ecology movements and women’s movements” aimed at the “reversal of environmental degradation” (Mies and Shiva 2010, 87) are rooted in simultaneous and ubiquitous concerns about the rights of women/Indigenous peoples and sustainable ecological practices. Despite the coinage of the term “Ecofeminism” by Francoise d’Eaubonne in the 1970s, Mies and Shiva (2010, 13) assert that “it became popular only in the context of numerous protests and activities against environmental destruction, sparked-off initially by recurring ecological disasters”.

There have been many attempts in the direction of maintaining ecological balance and addressing the problem of race, ethnicity, species, gender or class but these disjointed attempts cannot challenge and address different forms of oppression in their entirety. The multi-pronged nature of the wrongs done towards women and earth calls for an intersectional and holistic approach to counter the hegemonic apparatuses and structural hierarchies. This becomes pertinent in the light of the fact how the concerns of the postcolonial world would differ from the postcolonial nations or how women cannot be homogenized or clubbed as one category, or how the ecofeminist approach now cuts across other disciplines such as Disability Studies, Animal Rights, Queer Studies and so on.

A postcolonial focus and understanding in the field of ecofeminist activism would require a different critical lens vis-à-vis ecofeminist response emerging from the activists belonging to the First World. Melanie Duckworth in Chapter 6 makes insightful comments about the colonial history of Australia and the role of Aboriginals in developing an ecofeminist ethic based on their expert knowledge of the Australian Land. Aslı De pièce Altın in Chapter 33 analyses the definitions of postcolonialism given by different critics and concludes that a postcolonial ecofeminist lens critiques not just the exploitation of humans but also the devaluation of the environment and natural world of the postcolonial geographies. Many noted critics from or beyond the postcolonial
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locations such as Robert Young and Pablo Mukherjee consider structures of oppression and domination to be rooted in “corporate capitalism” and western and local elitism. Eminent scholar-activists from the postcolonial world like Vandana Shiva, Arundhati Roy and Wangari Maathai have impugned and brandished the Western imperialist culture of corporate globalization and militarization. Having said this, the meaty contribution of the First World activists such as Starhawk, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Alice Walker etc. cannot be discounted in favour of postcolonial ecofeminism as these women have actively engaged and participated in national and transnational anti-war, anti-nuclear protests, peace marches and other revolutionary campaigns. Another moot point that stems from this discussion is the role, function and stance of feminists/eco-feminists who are positionaized within the so-called minority cultures thriving in the United States. Are lived experiences, grassroots activism or concerns the same for all women? The answer is an obvious “No”. The unequal and varied experiential living on the part of ethnic minorities and Indigenous women necessitates different routes and mediums for activism which obviously fall out of the ambit of the white feminist thought. Benay Blend in Chapter 19 attests to this differentiation in the prioritization of concerns among Native American and First Nations women by citing the examples of Indigenous writers like Joy Harjo (Mvskoke), Linda Hogan (Chickasaw) and Stephanie Fitzgerald (Cree). Their writings capture the spirit and essence of Indigenous women, and reflect their multifarious concerns. Linda Hogan, Blend adds, advocates not one but many women’s movements that address the multi-layered issues and needs of Indigenous women. This calls for the conceptualization of Indigenous feminism which Blend grapples with when she raises these questions about the intersection of feminist and tribal concerns hinged on land sovereignty, and about the activist role of Indigenous women in response to violence and marginalization.

For Starhawk and many other ecofeminists, ecofeminism, apart from the interconnection between the exploitation of women and nature, is “also based on the recognition that these two forms of domination are bound up with class exploitation, racism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism” (qtd. in Gaard and Murphy 1998, 3). Ruether’s vision allies itself on twin operation – one is to use “public protest and communication media to delegitimize the present system” and the second is to “shape alternatives” for social justice and equality in local communities (2005, 97). Whether hailing from the First World or postcolonial nations, the question arises whether these ecofeminists sit in their theoretical ivory towers and act as mere purveyors or offer a concrete practical paradigm and engage in a direct line of action in order to battle the forces of oppression. Can we trace an intersectional approach that cuts across the lines of race, colour, class or sex in the writings and activism of these ecofeminists?

It is evident from the above discussion that ecofeminism is not a unified and coherent term rather different strands of discourse and practices have branched out from it, including liberal ecofeminism, spiritual/cultural ecofeminism and material ecofeminism, as has been explicated by Asmae Ourkiya in Chapter 29. Whereas some ecofeminists find a close connection between women and nature due to their biological function to be uplifting for activist movements in this field, there are others who find this association to be regressive and disabling for women as it relegates them solely to the realm of nurturance and reproductive abilities, and they consider this relation to be a socially constructed concept. Ourkiya also highlights how male and female roles and traits came to be essentialized (masculinity became synonymous with control, order, dominion, hubris, heterosexuality; femininity came to be associated with docility, submissiveness, irrationality and so on). This polarization between essentialism and constructionism was responsible for the emergence of various sub-categories of ecofeminist scholars and activists, labelling them as cultural ecofeminists, socialist ecofeminists or radical ecofeminists.

Rosemary Radford Ruether belongs to the liberal reformist camp of ecofeminism; Miriam Starhawk (a Wiccan priestess) fuses her witchcraft practice and writings with protests against nuclear wars; writings and activism of Vandana Shiva and Wangari Maathai stem from the
criss-crossing of postcolonial, cultural and material ecofeminism (nevertheless rooted in experiential knowing and actual lived realities of life of the Indigenous peoples). The chapter will examine whether the postcolonial and First World scholar-activists work along common grounds to override the apparent differences in economies, cultures, value systems and beliefs, and create cross-border and transnational links within feminist and environmentalist movements. However, instead of the linear approach of bifurcating my chapter to discuss two neat categories of First World and postcolonial ecofeminists, I have chosen to examine them according to the thematic and conceptual framework of activism and activist-writings.

Ecofeminism, Cross-cultural Connections, and Inclusivity

Much before the movement formalized itself as Ecofeminism in the 1970s in the Western societies, many countries in Africa, and South Asia already witnessed a rapid progression of environmental activism and movements. In India, the academic and scholarly rigour corroborated the already active grassroots movements; helped in defining the role of women and nature and gaining visibility as a structured social movement for empowerment. A similar idea has been endorsed by Değirmenci Altın in Chapter 33 in her analysis of the intersection and confluence between postcolonialism and ecofeminism. Değirmenci Altın cites Robert Young’s chapter on “postcolonial feminism” and other theorists such as Karen Warren and Greta Gaard whose works underscore the role of Chipko movement and other environmental issues taken up by women from postcolonial geographies.

In the First-World countries, the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) alerted people to the adverse impact of indiscriminate use of synthetic pesticides and became a turning point in the history of environmental activism. In 1978 in New York, mother and environmentalist Lois Gibbs started the Love Canal Movement, after discovering that their residential area was built on a toxic dumping site, which resulted in the rising cases of illnesses and reproductive issues including birth defects. In 1980 and 1981, women like ecofeminist Ynestra King marched at the Pentagon as part of Women’s Pentagon Actions against the militaristic policies of the Government and exploitation of marginalized people and nature.

What emerges from the above examples is the ubiquity of social and environmental justice movements across the globe and these struggles should ideally be structured around the foundational principle of inclusivity. Many ecofeminists such as Starhawk, Walker, and Ruether have vouched for an inclusive paradigm—“inclusive of both genders, inclusive of all social groups and races” (Ruether 1983, 16). I am interested in examining whether such pluralistic practices are followed by the selected ecofeminists or not. Hence, the chapter discusses the writings, vision and activism of a few selected ecofeminists individually as well as in relation to one another, and to humanity in general.

Alice Walker: Struggles, Movements and Cross-Cultural Concerns

Alice Walker (born February 9, 1944), a leading African-American feminist, environmentalist, and author, has been at the forefront of many revolutionary struggles including Civil Rights Movement in the United States since her college days. While writing about the fusion of writing and activism, Walker (1997, xxiv) asserts, “Now I know that, as with the best journalists, activism is often my muse. And that it is organic”. Her books like *Horses Make the Landscape More Beautiful* (1985), *Anything We Love Can Be Changed* (1997), and *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For* (2006) are deeply rooted in reverence for the earth. Walker (1988, 147) warns: “While the Earth is poisoned, everything it supports is poisoned. While the Earth is enslaved, none of us is free… While it is ‘treated like dirt,’ so are we.” In her non-fiction book *In Search of our Mothers’ Gardens*
Sunaina Jain (1983), Walker explores diverse topics including the theory and praxis of “womanism” (a term she coined for Black feminism), and rallies against the nuclear power industry and the lethal poison it can inject into our habitats. Her powerful articles on protests against America’s participation in the Vietnam war; association with Cuban leader Fidel Castro; her tributes to Bob Moses, Bob Marley and other artists and activists; her visit to Gaza in 2008 and continued support for the rights of Palestinians are all exemplary of a life devoted to social causes.1 Walker’s anti-war stance and protests against male or ethnic dominance in collaboration with the group Women for Women International are covered in her 2010 book Overcoming Speechlessness: A Poet Encounters the Horror in Rwanda, Eastern Congo and Palestine/Israel.

Walker’s collaboration with Pratibha Parmar on the documentary Warrior Marks, a politically polemical film adapted into book form Warrior Marks: Female Genital Mutilation and the Sexual Blinding of Women (1993),2 brings to light her inclusive “womanist”3 approach as it includes interviews with women from Senegal, Gambia and other African countries, the United States and England who are concerned with and affected by genital mutilation. Her humanitarian work with AIDS victims in Africa as well as her protests to end violence in the Middle East is covered in a documentary on her life Beauty in Truth (2013) (Farmer 2014). It also unfolds how she promotes literary activism and creativity of others through her enterprise in the form of the feminist publishing company, Wild Trees Press, established in 1984. According to Rudolph P. Byrd, Walker’s activism for peace and justice has “encompassed other revolutionary struggles, including the abolition of apartheid in South Africa; the native American movement; the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans-gendered movement; the human rights movement; and the animal rights movement” (Walker and Byrd 2010, 31).

Intersection of Ecofeminism and Agriculture/Forestry

 Whereas Walker has largely worked for the upliftment of the oppressed classes including animals and has rallied against the forces of militarism, activists such as Vandana Shiva (India) and Starhawk (United States) have worked, albeit in different geographical and social contexts, in the direction of creating subsistence economies using agriculture and farming as the vehicles for self-sufficiency and food sovereignty. Numerous writers, such as Sabine O’Hara, have broached this topic using different terms, such as “eco-sufficiency” or “provisioning”, perhaps avoiding the term “subsistence” (Murphy 2013, 209). Abhik Gupta in Chapter 9 examines the Bengali writer Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay’s novel Aranyak, which portrays the struggles of a woman for survival and raises questions about the forest land and resources being controlled by private ownership which become inaccessible to the rural/Indigenous people. Peter I-min Huang in Chapter 3 cites novelist Yao-ming Gan’s novel Pangcah Woman (2015), which projects the recent postcolonial ecofeminist trajectory in Taiwanese Literature. In the novel, Gu Axia is the “Pangcah” woman, Pangcah being the largest aboriginal group in Taiwan. Pajilu, the male protagonist, named after the local word for the breadfruit trees, a native plant of Hualian grandfather, is connected to his roots so much so that he understands well the language of plants and trees. However, compelled by circumstances and love for Gu Axia, he sells off the forest to an international lumbar conglomerate run by Japanese and other foreign interests. The novel ends tragically as Pajilu is crushed under the weight of the tree he had been trying to chop off. I-min Huang, while analysing the novel from an ecofeminist perspective, highlights the history of ecocide in Taiwan during the Japanese and Chinese invasion and challenges the nature/culture dualism perpetuated by the dominant masculinist power.

 At this juncture, one might feel compelled to ask why we need to situate the feminist concerns within the framework of agricultural as well as forestry policies like land ownership, seed sovereignty, crop selection, land redistribution, access to forest resources and deforestation, and
how farming is related to the issues of class, gender and ethnicity. It is crucial to understand that many ecofeminists (whether labelled or not) like Carolyn Merchant have traced the roots of the deliberate transition of the image of earth and nature from an organic entity to a machine (Merchant 1983, xxii) and ideological misrepresentation of women and nature as culturally passive and inferior, which licensed the taming and excavation of nature with impunity and allowed the advocates of capitalism and patriarchy to gain control over the resources of the land. Shiva calls it “maldevelopment” (death of the ecological principle) (2010, 4) and “reductionist” science (2010, 22). Such a reductionist view calls for serious attention as food production which was once socially organized turned into a commercial money-minting enterprise through the promotion of industrial agriculture by the multinational companies. The ideological systemic shift in outlook towards women and nature resulting from the neoliberal policies of Governments has been critiqued by many scholars. Nicolás Campisi in Chapter 17 foregrounds the role of Verónica Gago – co-founder of the movement “Ni una menos” which in English may roughly be translated to “Not one [woman] less.” Campisi further states that Gago finds parallels between the taming of and control over the female body and the rapacious colonial exploitation of communal lands under late-stage capitalism, and lashes out against the transnational corporations which appropriate, colonize and exploit communal lands, and this ruthless encroachment turns many First World and Indigenous women into a tormented category. The reason behind their suffering is that in Asia, Africa and Indigenous cultures of Australia and Native Americans, rural and Indigenous women have been the food providers and gatherers as well as primary caretakers of the family, but their sustenance rights have often been abused by the dominant capitalist classes.

**Vandana Shiva: Creating Local and Sustainable Communities**

Vandana Shiva, who was a forerunner during the women-led Chipko Movement along with Sunder Bahuguna in the 1970s, has a long career spanning almost five decades spent advocating the rights of rural women and Indigenous people, upholding traditional practices and natural healing processes, and rallying against the threats posed by GMOs, biopiracy, and the patenting of our biodiversity.

Shiva’s struggles to protect agricultural biodiversity and to foreground the parallel struggles of women and nature are manifest in her books *Ecofeminism* (1993), co-authored with Maria Mies, *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge* (1997), *Staying Alive* (2010), *Earth Democracy* (2006) and *Oneness vs. the 1%: Shattering Illusions, Seeding Freedom* (2018). Her wide-ranging corpus encompasses contemporary issues ranging from widespread poverty and malnutrition, an alarming refugee crisis, economic polarization, toxic colonialism of MNCs to genetic food engineering, biopiracy, natural resource privatization, and depletion and exploitation of planetary resources. Broadly speaking, Shiva finds solutions to all the ills in equitable distribution of earth’s resources and her activism primarily rests on securing the rights of all the oppressed classes including nature.

Shiva founded Navdanya in 1991 as a movement rooted in food sovereignty. The movement thrives on organic farming and riddance from chemicals and poisons. Navdanya’s Seeds of Hope project is exemplary of the efficacy of the work at the local level in a decentralized manner. Her persistent efforts in carrying forward Navdanya have proved immensely useful in the midst of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic as the millet produce provided food and nutrition for the families and communities in spite of lockdown. Shiva asserts, “And while we are overwhelmed by disease and death, a living food culture can show the light to the path of life”.

Vandana Shiva’s grassroots struggles on the streets of Seattle as part of the International Forum on Globalization in November 1999, and in farms, and her founding of *Bija VidyaPeeth*, or the School of the Seed in 2004 (to teach organic farming techniques and natural insecticides) are based on the principles of community, interconnectedness, inclusion, nonviolence and equitable sharing
of the resources of the earth. Shiva has worked with grassroots organizations across Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe and her transnational activism reinforces the point that concerns of women, Indigenous peoples and nature have more commonalities than differences. In Chapter 19, Blend also addresses the issues of indigenous peoples, their connection with land, other species and resources, and brings out their resilience, resistance and rebellion against the exploitative forces which undergird their activism.

One such example is of women of the Kizibi community of Uganda who created a seed bank in 2008 to preserve local biodiversity in the face of the commercialization of seeds by corporate multinationals (Nankya et al. 2017). Activists like Mariama Sonko in Senegal continue to lead on agroecological farming initiatives for localized and sustainable food production. A campaign “We Are the Solution” for food sovereignty in Africa in 2011 “became a rural women’s movement in 2014” (Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa 2018). Interestingly, the argument of the paper is even more substantiated when we observe how Alice Walker’s activist spirit cuts across the boundaries of space, race or ethnicity as she allies herself with the interests of the farmers in India and across the world. Her advocacy of the Farmers’ Protest in India against the Farm Bills mirrors her concerns for all the oppressed people of the world. In one of her poems, she shows her support for the farmers of India as she writes that though Indian farmers were oppressed for centuries by the British rule, now they are equipped to assert their rights and dignity, and also to protest vehemently against their victimization and to fight the greed of the heads of state” (Alice Walker: The Official Website 2021).

Wangari Maathai: A Pioneering African Eco-Warrior

The concerns and issues of women in postcolonial countries often intersect and overlap, and many environmental movements stem from similar causes. What the women-led Chipko movement in India achieved in the 1970s has parallels in The Green Belt Movement (GBM) led by Wangari Maathai (1940–2011), the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate.

The Green Belt Movement, initiated in 1977, was conceived as a practical way to address the needs that rural women were facing, specifically for clean drinking water, nutritious food, firewood and fodder, and to prevent deforestation, desertification and soil loss (Maathai 2008, 24). The Movement gained immense popularity and was the subject of a documentary film, Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai in 2008. As the first woman in East and Central Africa to earn a doctorate degree, Professor Maathai was internationally acknowledged for her struggle for democracy, human rights and environmental conservation. Her book The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience (1985) encapsulates her struggles, bottlenecks and triumphs in the journey of assisting women in planting a million trees, fighting against deforestation and desertification, and promoting conservation model, despite vilification from the Government. Her books including The Challenge for Africa (2009) and Replenishing the Earth: Spiritual Values for Healing Ourselves and the World (2010) advance the cause of ecofeminism as these foreground Maathai’s love for the traditional spiritual values and commitment to service; underscore her efforts in empowering women through grassroots activism, and carry impassioned pleas to heal the wounds of nature. Her memoir The Unbowed (2006) unravels the intersectional nature of tribalism, gender, politics, poverty and corruption, and upholds the belief that no fight against a singular force will yield results unless all are addressed together.

Maathai was also instrumental in founding an NGO Mottinai in Japan following her visit in 2005. The concept of Mottinai encompasses the idea of respecting resources and not wasting them, and this way of life galvanizes people to look beyond consumerism and “value each item independently, adding the fourth ‘R’ of ‘respect’ to the well-known mantra of ‘reduce, reuse, recycle’” (Crossley-Baxter 2020). Mottinai revitalized by Maathai, whether propounded openly by Alice
Walker or not, is certainly rooted in Walker’s doctrine of living, she being an ardent follower of Buddhist concepts and practices. Coincidentally, the musical version of “We Have a Beautiful Mother” was adapted for Maathai’s memorial ceremony in New York City, in November 2011 (Mihoko and Rowe 2017), and such interconnections among activists across the globe reinforce their cross-cultural solidarity as a veritable well-spring of strength and resilience. Walker also wrote an election-year poem, “Democratic Womanism,” dedicated to Maathai, who, as Walker says, remembered the beautiful bountifulness of her land before colonization and resolved to bring it back by planting trees (Walker 2012).

**Arundhati Roy: An Indian Scholar-Activist**

Another scholar-activist from postcolonial India is Arundhati Roy, a Booker prize winner, who has voiced her dissent to protect the rights of the marginalized tribal classes on the verge of displacement due to the construction of dams in the Narmada valley. Vandana Shiva, in her book *Staying Alive*, considers the damming of rivers as nothing short of sacralization and maintains that such reckless construction of dams resulting in the displacement of people from Narmada valley or Tehri whose “resistance is against the destruction of entire civilizations and ways of life” (2010, 189). Shiva (2010, 185) called these dams as “temples of modern India, dedicated to capitalist farmers and industrialists”.

In Chapter 11, Pervine Elrefaei documents ecofeminist literature from the Arabic countries, and explores path-breaking novels like *Al-Bab al-Maftouh* (1960; *The Open Door* 2017), penned by Latifa-al-Zayyat (1923–1996) which portrays similar struggles of people around the issues of water and land sovereignty. The novel draws strong parallels between Egypt’s struggle for land and water sovereignty and the female protagonist Layla’s struggle for body sovereignty, and in fighting biological determinism, hierarchical dualisms, and claustrophobic gendered social codes for women. Layla, despite the masculinist control over her actions, turns into an activist as she finally joins the national struggle against the ecological destruction caused by the yoke of imperialist rule. Such strong fictional characters enthuse people to join liberation struggles, and their efforts foreground the intersection of activism and literature.

Besides being a vocal critic of the constructions of dams, Roy also denounced the paramilitary attacks on the tribal peoples of central India, whose land, rich in minerals, the government wanted to grab. Many of her life-long concerns permeate the fabric of her fiction and non-fiction – the Man Booker Prize Winner *The God of Small Things* (1997), *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) and *My Seditious Heart* (2019) (her collected non-fiction). Her work may not classify as purely ecofeminist literature, nevertheless, these are allied with environmentalism and the interests of the oppressed people.

**Starhawk: Ecofeminism in Witchcraft and Permaculture**

While we have discussed Shiva, Walker, Roy and Maathai, a North American contemporary witch Starhawk belongs to another end of the spectrum as the one who creates a confluence of witchcraft, magic, healing and permaculture in her writings as well as activism. She has authored many books on Goddess religion, earth-based spirituality, and activism, including *The Spiral Dance* (1999); her picture book for young children, *The Last Wild Witch* (2009) and *The Earth Path* (2013), a sequel to *The Spiral Dance* which weaves together permaculture and spirituality.

Starhawk (1999, 19) believes that spirituality and politics both involve changing consciousness. Her Wiccan practice embodies not only her love for earth-based pagan spiritualism especially Goddess religion but also non-violent direct political engagement by protesting against “testing of nuclear weapons, to counter military interference in Central America, and to preserve the
environment” (Starhawk 1999, 18). Like Alice Walker, she was also drawn to the problems of Nicaragua and worked towards building alliances with people of colour and the native peoples who have faced centuries of oppression (Starhawk 1999, 18). Her Goddess religion is centred around three basic principles – immanence, interconnection and community and also advances the idea that “growth and transformation come through intimate interactions and common struggles” (Starhawk 1999, 22). Therefore, Starhawk’s spiritual inclination is not divested of politics and need for urgent social and environmental change. Her spirituality is not of the separatist bandwagon as her group ‘Reclaiming’ honours both God and Goddess, and works with male and female images of divinity. Her ongoing Live Ritual Course for 2021 which focuses on three themes – vision, healing and strategy – is an attempt to “hone the magical skills to divine, to discern, and to envision what is needed and what we desire, for ourselves and for the world” (Starhawk 2021).

Starhawk has written two speculative design novels including The Fifth Sacred Thing (1993) and City of Refuge (2016) in which “characters learn permaculture principles” (Hamraie 2020). Unlike other ecofeminists taken for the study who spread awareness about farming practices mainly in the rural areas, Starhawk spreads permaculture work and sustainable ecosystem in the urban settings and her book The Earth Path (2004) and her design school (Earth Activist Training) are efforts steered in the same direction. Starhawk (Gadoua 2016) praises the Black Lives Matter movement for drawing attention to the interconnected issues of people and envisions a world of justice and diversity, “where women have power and agency; where we come back into balance with the natural world” (qtd. in Lilly 2016).

**Rosemary Radford Ruether: Intersection of Religion, Ecology, and Feminism**

While Starhawk works within the spiritual/cultural wing of ecofeminism, Rosemary Radford Ruether, an influential American feminist scholar and theologian (born in 1936) belongs to the liberal reformist camp. In truth, her feminist theology is grounded in her civil rights work in the Mississippi Delta in the mid-1960s and in the Latin American tradition of liberation theology to which she was introduced in the early 1970s (Scholp 2017, 1).

Ruether’s belief in forging “real connections between theory and practice” is exemplified well in her scholarly and grassroots activism (2005, xi). In her book, *Integrating Ecofeminism, Globalization and World Religions* (2005), Ruether believes in the power of interfaith theology and the greening of world religions as a solution to the global ecological crisis and oppression of women. As a feminist theologian, Ruether does not confine herself to arm-chair intellectualism, rather she works in the direction of real-time solutions, blending her erudition with hands-on practices in communities of resistance and solidarity in order to combat the twin oppression of women and nature. She recalls in her autobiography *My Quests for Hope and Meaning*:

> I sought to connect ecology and feminism, both in recognition of the way the domination of the earth is metaphorically interconnected with the domination of women in patriarchal ideology, and also to reveal how women’s use and abuse in society interfaces with the abuse of nature

*(Ruether 2013, 27)*

Though mainly known for work in the field of liberation theology and feminist theology, Ruether’s activism aligns itself with the interests and concerns of other ecofeminists. In tune with Vandana Shiva’s stance, Ruether is critical of corporate globalization and its deleterious effects, and liaisons among globalization, Bretton woods institutions and poverty. Like Shiva and Walker, Ruether raises concerns about the growing industrial agribusiness in the United States, which relies hugely on hybrid seeds, pesticides, and is inserting poison into the ecological systems of...
soil, plants, water and air, and also the inherent problems in genetically engineered seeds and its product “terminator seeds” (Ruether 2005, 19). For Ruether, today’s “globalization” is “simply the latest stage of Western colonialis...
8 Permaculture is a system of ecological design that looks to nature as our model. It originated in the 1970s with Australian ecologists Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, who were looking to create a “permanent agriculture.” The focus of permaculture is to design and create social structures which “favor beneficial patterns of human behavior” (Starhawk, “Social Permaculture—What Is It?” 2016). Available at: https://www.ic.org/social-permaculture-what-is-it/

References


